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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: GOVERNMENT OFFERS OPPOSITION STRUCTURED
DIALOGUE

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (SBU) Summary: On April 1, Minister of Corrections and Legal Assistance Dmitry Shashkin presented a GOG proposal for dialogue and cooperation on the "second wave of democratic reforms" to the diplomatic community. Shashkin invited all political parties to discuss the government proposal on April 2 at a neutral site -- the Tbilisi Courtyard Marriott. The Christian-Democratic Movement (CDM), Democratic Party of Georgia, and Public Defender's Office (PDO) have signaled their intention to participate. Most non-parliamentary opposition parties, including Irakli Alasania's Alliance for Georgia, issued a statement dismissing Shashkin's offer as an "imitation of dialogue and inadequate." They refuse to talk with the government, unless the subject is President Saakashvili's resignation. End Summary.

MAJORITY, SHASHKIN OFFER DIALOGUE

12. (SBU) On March 31 the Parliamentary Majority issued a statement declaring the GOG's and United National Movement's (UNM) willingness to "discuss and cooperate together with all opposition parties" on the implementation of further democratic reforms in Georgia. On April 1, Shashkin presented to the diplomatic corps the government's proposed structure of working groups and special commissions to execute this willingness. (Note: The proposed structure and March 31 statement were sent to EUR-CARC and DRL via email. End note.) Shashkin drafted the proposal after meeting with Parliamentary Minority Leader Giorgi Targamadze and Deputy Public Defender Giorgi Chkheidze. Both agreed to support the proposal.

13. (SBU) The International Republican Institute (of which Shashkin is the former country director) told us that they had reserved a room at the Courtyard Marriott for April 2, where Shashkin could meet and discuss the government proposal with political parties. Shashkin told the diplomatic corps that he would invite all political parties to participate. The CDM and MP Gia Tortladze's party, the Democratic Party of Georgia, both expressed willingness to participate in the new structure. CDM Vice Speaker Levan Vepkhvadze said that if parties refuse to participate, they could not claim to favor dialogue in resolving current tensions.

NON-PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION SPURN OFFER

14. (U) In a joint statement released on April 1 non-parliamentary opposition parties refused to accept the government offer of dialogue. The non-parliamentary opposition called Shashkin's proposal a "distraction, and attempt to mislead society and the international community." The group said they were interested in dialogue on one topic only -- Saakashvili's resignation. The statement was signed by the Alliance for Georgia (New Rights Party, Republican Party, Irakli Alasania); Democratic Movement; United Georgia (Nino Burjanadze); Georgia's Way (Salome Zourabichvili);

Movement for United Georgia (ex-defense minister Irakli Okruashvili); People's Party (Koba Davitashvili); Conservative Party (Kakha Kukava and Zviad Dzidziguri); and Levan Gachechiladze.

NOTICEABLY ABSENT

¶5. (SBU) Several opposition parties that have signaled their intent to participate in the April 9 protests did not sign on to the above statement. This includes the Industrialists (Zurab Tkemaladze); Movement for a Just Georgia (former PM Zurab Noghaidei); the Labor Party (Shalva Natelashvili); the Freedom Party (Konstantine Gamsakhurdia); and other smaller parties. This could indicate that some non-parliamentary parties at least want to keep their options open, if they determine Shashkin's proposals to have merit.

PROPOSAL DETAILS

¶6. (SBU) Shashkin's proposal envisages a Main Council for Democratic Reforms that would oversee and coordinate among multiple, issue-specific councils. The Main Council would include Shashkin's office, the Majority and Minority Leaders from Parliament, the Public Defender's Office (PDO), and the Chairman of Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee. Two other groups would provide oversight to the Main Council. The first would be composed of political parties and civil society organizations. All parties would be invited, as would those NGOs monitoring democratic reforms. This Council would propose reforms. The second monitoring group would be made up of the diplomatic corps, and would receive and share information, in order to observe and mark the progress of the

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Main Council for Democratic Reforms.

¶7. (SBU) Shashkin noted that some of the councils already exist (i.e. The Interagency Council to Combat TIP). (Note: The details on these councils is contained in the proposal e-mailed to CARC and DRL. End note.) Shashkin said his goal is to create four new Working Groups, namely: Media, Constitutional Reform, Human Rights, and Judicial Reform.

AMBASSADORS WANT TO HELP BUT NOT MEDIATE

¶8. (SBU) At the April 1 meeting, the Ambassador stressed that while the U.S. Embassy would support such an initiative, "we could not and would not be enforcers," nor would this be an appropriate role for any foreign government. EU Ambassador Per Eklund agreed with the Ambassador and said such a forum could help the group report on democratic processes. The Czech Ambassador, in his EU Presidency role, noted that he supported such an initiative in principle, but wanted to discuss it with other EU ambassadors and provide a joint response. Shashkin also raised the possibility of major donors participating (i.e. UNDP, USAID, etc.) in the Main Council for Democratic Reforms. Several ambassadors expressed concern that Shashkin's structure was so ambitious, that it would require a significant, dedicated staffing component to properly execute.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) The Georgian public has repeatedly called on both the opposition and GOG to meet, talk, and compromise for the good of the country. With Shashkin's proposal, the GOG has again offered the opposition an opening. Timing the proposal ahead of the April 9 protests certainly puts the onus on the opposition. However, rather than call the dealer to ensure it is not a bluff, the radical opposition has folded by rejecting the offer. By dismissing the proposal out of hand, rather than offering some participation or exploration, the opposition's accusation of "another GOG bait-and-switch" rings hollow. If they expect to hold the government to

account before the public, then they must engage when given the opportunity. As the Ambassador and EC Ambassador Eklund told the media following the April 1 unveiling of the proposal, "we all support dialogue; compromise is the essence of democracy." While foreign missions cannot and should not act as brokers, the idea of using ambassadors to review progress of the Main Council could help push forward needed reforms.

TEFFT